

Salary for Bastrop County court-at-law judge
(HB 2340 by Saunders/Armbrister)

DIGEST: HB 2340 would have required Bastrop County to pay its county court-at-law judge at least 90 percent of the salary paid to a state district judge, including supplements. Language prohibiting the county from paying the court-at-law judge more than the state pays district judges (not including local supplements) would have been repealed. The bill would have raised the ceiling on civil jurisdiction from \$50,000 to \$100,000 and would have added jurisdiction in Industrial Accident Board appeals. Jurisdiction of the constitutional county court when the county judge is not licensed to practice law would have been expanded to include magistrate functions and criminal cases transferred by agreement with the county court-at-law judge.

GOVERNOR'S
REASON
FOR VETO:

Under current law, discretion is left with local officials in setting the salary of this judge. Mandating the salary of a county court-at-law judge and removing local officials' discretion over such a local issue is not appropriate.

RESPONSE:

A spokesman for Rep. Robert Saunders, the author of HB 2340, said that although the governor felt the bill removed local discretion, it was filed at the unanimous request of county commissioners. The commissioners "were tired of going through a negotiation process and preferred to set the salary based on workload," he said. "They estimated that the county court-at-law has about 90 percent of the workload of a district court."

NOTES:

HB 2340 passed the House on the Local Calendar and was not analyzed in a Daily Floor Report.